

Message Text

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70

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-20 PC-04 NIC-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01

PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 EB-11 EUR-25

OMB-01 DRC-01 /194 W

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R 252027Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4038

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 7789

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, AR

SUBJECT: US-ARGENTINE RELATIONS: A NEW ERA?

REF: BA 7590 AND BA 7730

1. SUMMARY. THERE ARE STRAWS IN THE WIND WHICH SUGGEST THAT THE ATTITUDE OF THE PERONIST GOVERNMENT TOWARD THE US MAY BE MEL-LOWING. BUT THE TEST WILL COME WITH LOOMING SERIOUS BI-LATERAL PROBLEMS. THE DEGREE OF ACCOMODATION WITH WHICH BOTH GOVERNMENTS APPROACH THEIR ISSUES WILL DETERMINE WHETHER THE PRESENT HARBING-ERS HERALD A NEW ERA IN OUR RELATIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. THERE IS A RISING SPECULATION IN INFORMED CIRCLES IN BUENOS AIRES THAT US-ARGENTINE RELATIONS MAY BE ENTERING INTO A NEW PERIOD OF CLOSER COOPERATION AND GREATER GOOD WILL. THE PRIN- CIPLE IMPETUS TO THIS SPECULATION UNDOUBTEDLY WAS THE WIDELY PUBLICIZED EXCHANGE OF LETTERS BETWEEN PRESIDENT NIXON AND PRESIDENT PERON ON THE OCCASION OF THE LATTER'S INAUGURATION, AND THE EQUAL PLAY GIVEN BY THE MEDIA TO FOREIGN MINISTER VIGNES' MEETING WITH SECRETARY OF STATE KISSINGER IN NEW YORK. IT WAS LESS THE SUBSTANCE OF THESE EVENTS THAN THEIR OBVIOUS WARM AND FRIENDLY TONE WHICH HAS STRUCK PUBLIC OPINION. THIS TONE IS FAR REMOVED FROM THE COOLNESS PERCEPTIBLE ON THE ARGEN- CONFIDENTIAL

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TINE SIDE IN THE PERIOD FOLLOWING THE INAUGURATION OF PRESIDENT CAMPORA LAST MAY.

3. INDEED, THIS CHANGE WAS RECENTLY COMMENTED UPON BY THE HIGHLY

REGARDED COMMENTATOR CLAUDIO ESCRIBANO IN THE WEEKLY ARGENTINE MAGAZINE GENTE (CIRCULATION 265M), EDITION OF OCT 19. ESCRIBANO REPLIED TO A QUESTION CONCERNING PERON'S ANSWER TO PRESIDENT NIXON BY STATING THAT PERON'S LETTER WAS TRULY IMPORTANT WHILE NOTING THAT PERON HAS GENERALLY BEEN MORE CAREFUL IN HIS STATEMENTS ABOUT THE UNITED STATES THAN HE HAS GENERALLY BEEN MADE OUT TO BE. ESCRIBANO QUOTED THE PORTION OF PERON'S REPLY TO PRESIDENT NIXON WHICH INDICATED PERON'S SATISFACTION WITH THE SUBSTANCE OF THE RECENT MEETING BETWEEN FOREIGN MINISTER VIGNES AND SECRETARY OF STATE KISSINGER, INCLUDING THE SENTENCE "THIS ATMOSPHERE MAKES IT POSSIBLE TO THINK THAT A NEW STAGE IS BEGINNING, THE REALIZATION OF WHICH WE LOOK FORWARD TO WITH UNDERSTANDABLE MUTUAL INTEREST". COMMENTING, THEN, THAT IF VIGNES' MISSION HAD INCLUDED OPENING THE WAY TO REFINANCING THE FOREIGN DEBT, AS CLAIMED IN HIGH OFFICIAL CIRCLES, ESCRIBANO SAID THAT POSSIBLY SOME PEOPLE MAY MODERATE THEIR FEELINGS ABOUT THE ACTUAL INFLUENCE THAT EUROPE MAY HAVE IN THE FUTURE ON ARGENTINA'S FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPROVEMENT. HE ADDED THAT THE POSSIBILITY OF A VISIT BY SECRETARY KISSINGER TO ARGENTINA AT A LATER DATE SHOULD NOT BE RULED OUT.

4. THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL OTHER RECENT DEVELOPMENTS WHICH PERHAPS ARE EARLY HARBINGERS OF A POSSIBLE CHANGE IN ATTITUDE TOWARD THE UNITED STATES. IT IS NOTEWORTHY IN THIS CONNECTION THAT I WAS RECEIVED BY GENERAL PERON WHEN HE STILL WAS THE PRESIDENT-ELECT ON OCTOBER 5 AND THAT THE ROUND OF PROTOCOLARY FUNCTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH MY DEPARTURE FROM THE POST HAS INCLUDED A LUNCHEON IN MY HONOR BY FOREIGN MINISTER VIGNES ATTENDED BY MINISTER OF JUSTICE BENITEZ AND A DINNER GIVEN BY INTERIOR MINISTER LLAMBI. ALSO, BOTH MINISTER OF ECONOMY GELBARD AND MINISTER OF EDUCATION TAIANA ATTENDED MY FAREWELL RECEPTION ON SEPTEMBER 20. PERHAPS EVEN MORE IMPRESSIVE WAS THE ATTENDANCE AT A DINNER GIVEN BY MY WIFE AND ME FOR MR AND MRS FRANK ORTIZ ON OCTOBER 19, WHICH INCLUDED SUCH LEADING LIGHTS OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT AS THE NEW SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE PRESIDENCY, DR SOLANO LIMA; FIRST VICE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE, DR ALLENDE; THE MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR, BENITO LLAMBI; THE PRESIDENT OF THE CENTRAL BANK, GOMEZ CONFIDENTIAL

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MORALES; THE UNDER-SECRETARY OF JUSTICE, PEREZ PARDO; EX-FOREIGN MINISTER UNDER PERON, HIPOLITO PAZ; THE URUGUAYAN AMBASSADOR FOLLE MARTINEZ; AND SUCH FOREIGN OFFICE LUMINARIES AS AMBASSADOR DE LA PLAZA. THE ATMOSPHERE AT DINNER WAS WARM AND FRIENDLY, AND THE ACCEPTANCES BY VIRTUALLY ALL THOSE INVITED--MORE, IN FACT, THAN WE HAD EXPECTED--STRONGLY SUGGEST THAT THIS WAS FAR FROM ACCIDENTAL.

5. THE ABOVE SUGGESTS THAT WE MAY INDEED BE MOVING INTO A PERIOD IN WHICH GREATER COOPERATION WILL BE POSSIBLE. IF SO, THIS WOULD REPRESENT AN IMPORTANT ACHIEVEMENT ON THE PART OF THE EMBASSY AND THE DEPARTMENT IN GUIDING OUR BI-LATERAL RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH THE SHOALS OF AN EXTREMELY DELICATE AND CRITICAL PERIOD.

IT IS, OF COURSE, IMPORTANT TO REMIND OURSELVES THAT THESE ARE MERE STRAWS IN THE WIND AT BEST. BY OUR PRUDENT OFFICIAL SILENCE ON SOME OF THE MORE DRAMATIC MOVES OF THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT AFTER MAY 25 (RECOGNITION OF CUBA, NORTH KOREA AND EAST GERMANY, THE CREDIT TO CUBA, THE ARGENTINE POSITION AT THE CARACAS CONFERENCE OF ARMY COMMANDERS AND AT THE OAS MEETING IN LIMA, ETC), WE HAVE AVOIDED CONFRONTATIONS ON THESE ISSUES. BUT WE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT WE HAVE NOT YET FACED A CRUNCH WITH THE GOA ON MATTERS OF SERIOUS IMPORTANCE IN OUR BI-LATERAL RELATIONS AND THAT SEVERAL OF THESE ISSUES (CIVIL AVIATION, STEEL SCRAP, SALES OF U.S. SUBSIDIARIES IN ARGENTINA TO CUBA) ARE BEGINNING TO LOOM EVER CLOSER. HOW DISTURBING THESE ISSUES MAY BECOME TO OUR BI-LATERAL RELATIONS WILL OF COURSE DEPEND UPON MANY FACTORS, NOT THE LEAST OF WHICH ARE OUR ABILITY TO MEET ARGENTINE ASPIRATIONS WHICH THEY REGARD AS REASONABLE AND LEGITIMATE AND THE ALTERNATIVES WHICH THE GOA MAY FEEL THAT IT HAS FOR REPLACING PRESENT ARRANGEMENTS WITHOUT SERIOUS DAMAGE TO ITS OWN INTERESTS. PERON TRADITIONALLY HAS DISPLAYED A REMARKABLE PRAGMATISM IN HIS POLITICAL DECISIONS, BUT PERON IS NOT YET THE MASTER IN HIS OWN HOUSE AND HIS FREEDOM OF DECISION IS COMPROMISED BY THE NECESSITIES OF DEALING WITH THE LEFT AND RIGHT WINGS OF HIS HETEROGENEOUS MOVEMENT, ELEMENTS OF WHICH ARE NOTORIOUSLY ANTI-AMERICAN. PERON RECENTLY COMMENTED TO AN ITALIAN INTERVIEWER THAT THE US TALK OF A NEW AND BETTER RELATIONSHIP WITH LATIN AMERICA THUS FAR IS JUST WORDS AND THAT CONCRETE ACTS MUST BE AWAITED. THE SAME APPLIES IN REVERSE OF COURSE; WE MUST WAIT AND SEE WHETHER THE RECENT FAVORABLE SIGNALS OF PERONIST OFFICIALDOM INDICATED ABOVE REPRESENT ANYTHING MORE THAN A NEW SWING IN
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PERON'S HABITUAL PENDULAR POLITICS.

IN THE MEANTIME, AS NOTED IN MY 7533, FONMIN VIGNES ON SATURDAY, OCTOBER 13, SAID WORDS TO THE EFFECT THAT THE TIME WAS APPROACHING WHEN WE SHOULD TALK TURKEY.
LODGE

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<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 11 MAY 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 25 OCT 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973BUENOS07789
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: 11652 GDS
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: BUENOS AIRES
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731065/abqceemi.tel
Line Count: 149
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: BA 7590 AND BA 7730
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 JAN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15-Jan-2002 by shawdg>; APPROVED <06-Feb-2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: US-ARGENTINE RELATIONS: A NEW ERA?
TAGS: PFOR, AR
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005